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BROWNBACK DEFENDS CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO LIFE

WASHINGTON – U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback today spoke on the Senate floor joining U.S. Sen. Rick Santorum as an original co-sponsor of a bill that would end the inhumane procedure known as ‘partial birth abortion’.

“Today, I join Senator Santorum, calling for an end to this terrible practice known as partial birth abortion,” Brownback said. “Last year, the Senate failed to override the president’s veto by three votes, and President Clinton has twice vetoed similar bills in 1996 and 1997. We will continue, however, to raise this issue until we do the right thing by banning this procedure.

“Partial birth abortion is a method ‘in which the person performing the abortion partially delivers a living fetus before killing the fetus and completing the delivery.’ This procedure will be performed hundreds of times this month throughout America, as a state-sanctioned form of death.

“The Jewish writer Sandi Merle puts it this way: ‘When I think of partial-birth abortion, I hear only the first two words - ‘Partial Birth’. To me, this procedure is not abortion. It is pre-term delivery followed by an act of destruction leading to a painful death...This is infanticide, clearly and simply, and must be stopped... This is about leaving no fingerprints when committing a murder of convenience.’

“I will once again vote to end partial-birth abortion when it comes to the Senate floor. It is a cruel and shameless procedure which robs us of our humanity with every operation performed. It is not true that the anesthesia kills the child before removal from the womb. Instead, it is a fact that the baby is actually alive and experiences extraordinary pain when undergoing the operation.

“Nor is this brutality only reserved for the most extreme circumstances. According to the Executive Director of the National Coalition of Abortion Providers, the ‘vast majority’ of partial-birth abortions are performed in the fifth and sixth months of pregnancy, on healthy babies of healthy mothers.

“The facts speak for themselves. Bluntly put, this involves the death of a child in a brutal fashion, and all of it legally condoned by the highest governmental authorities.

“Our institutionalized indifference to this extraordinary suffering makes me wonder, ‘What has happened to our collective conscience as a nation’? Are we so callous that we knowingly condone this form of death for our very weakest which we would never force on any adult, no matter how criminal?

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Even murderers on death row are given more consideration when executed. Yet we allow our babies to painfully die while conscious. This extraordinary cruelty should cause us to bow our heads in shame.

“In a *Wall Street Journal* article, Peggy Noonan rightly labeled events such as at Columbine High School as evidence of a much deeper problem, one which she identified as the ‘culture of death.’ She was referring to a statement made by Pope John Paul II during his recent visit to Mexico City when he urged a rejection of the increasingly influential ‘culture of death’, and the embracing of a principle of life with dignity for all.

“It is obvious, especially after the Columbine tragedy, that a culture of death is playing in our land, and the volume has been turned up loudly lately. The words to this song include the extremes we know by heart – the excessively high murder rates, the repeated rampages of violence by school children against school children, the unending violence and vulgarity in the media, to name only a few cultural malfunctions. As Noonan observes, people ‘no longer say, ‘If you don’t like it, change the channel.’ They now realize something they didn’t realize ten years ago: There is no channel to change to. You could sooner remove an ocean than find such a channel.’

“Perhaps our increasingly violent culture has dulled our consciences and worn us down to this place where it is no longer politically expedient to protest the obscene suffering of infants. This would explain why we continue to tolerate such brutality as partial birth abortion. I hope it isn’t so. It is to this conscience that I appeal – I appeal to those who recognize this suffering and do not turn their heads, who take personal responsibility to correct this course of destruction, no matter the political consequences.

“Every once in a while something happens which shakes us from our dullness. I share an event which was reported in the *Washington Times*. It describes an incident in April of this year in Cincinnati where a botched partial birth abortion resulted in the birth of a little girl who lived for three hours. It is reported that the ‘emergency room technician rocked and sang to her.’ Then after the inevitable death of the baby, the staff members grieved so badly that hours were spent ‘in counseling and ‘venting’ to get over the emotional trauma of the incident.’ One person observes that the ‘real tragedy here is that no laws were broken.’

“I hope we will continue to let ourselves be troubled by this event. We should declare that what happened to this little girl was simply wrong, and cannot be rationalized. We should reject this culture of death which endorses children dying in this violent manner. In short, we should pass this legislation, and help mercy and goodness triumph over the violence and destruction which stalks our nation,” Brownback said.